

**LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HARVEST – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi
OSM**

Mt 13.24-43

At that time Jesus put another parable before the crowds, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world." Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age.

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Jesus proposes three parables to His disciples that concern the three great temptations of the community:

- the temptation to be an elite community
- the temptation to greatness
- the temptation of discouragement.

For these parables Jesus uses three elements from nature, wheat, mustard seeds and yeast, that ask for a patient process of growth; any acceleration could be tragic. These parables serve to be able to understand what is the Kingdom of Heaven. This expression, typical of Matthew, does not mean the Kingdom of Heaven, but the Kingdom of God, that is the alternative society that Jesus has come to propose.

The first parable speaks of a man that has sown good seed, but during the night the enemy came and sowed weeds. The weeds are plants that together with wheat are toxic and have a narcotic effect. Well then the servants are astonished that in the field of their master there are weeds and begin to doubt the goodness of his sowing and ask “*«Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? »*” and the master replies: “*«An enemy has done this !»*”

And here the eagerness of servants: “*«Then do you want us to go and gather them?’*” Their action risks to be more dangerous than the weeds. The eagerness of the servants is more dangerous than the damage that the weeds can do. The master replies: “*«No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them»*”.

When the moment of maturation comes, it will be evident which is the wheat, that offers life, and which are the weeds, that are toxic and produce death.

In the second parable Jesus takes a distance from the greatness of the kingdom that had been described by the book of the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 17. The prophet imagined a very high mountain and on top of this high mountain a cedar tree . The cedar is a most beautiful plant, a beautiful tree, called ‘the king of the trees’, therefore something that attracts attention also from a distance.

Well, Jesus takes His distance from all this, “*The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed..*” that is a tiny element, almost microscopic, “*..that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants..*” Pay attention to this detail. It is not a plant that grows on a high mountain, but in a household garden. The bush of the senape plant – because it cannot be called a tree – at the moment of maximum growth arrives at two and a half meters, three meters maximum in height.

It is a common plant that does not attract attention. The Kingdom of God, even at the moment of full growth, does not attract the attention of mankind for its grandness, for its magnificence. But, being this tiny seed, the wind takes it everywhere and it is an invasive plant.

Finally the third parable that concerns the Kingdom, says: "*«The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened. »*" Why does the evangelist use this unite of measurement? Three measures of flour are about 40 kilos and this unite is found in three episodes in the Old Testament that concerns the realization of something thought to be unrealizable. It is this that they offer Abraham and Sara when they announce that they will have a child even so late in life.

It is also Gideon, that feels abandoned by God and believes that the promise of freedom of the Lord cannot be realized, and Anna, the mother of the prophet Samuel, that was sterile and in fact will have a son. Therefore it is about situations which seem impossible but that become reality. So, Jesus assures that the strength of His message is so that it will be able to reach the whole world.

Three parables, the only one that the disciples ask to be explained is that of the weeds, but not because they have not understood it; it is because they have understood and do not agree. They are animated with sentiments of superiority, of ambition, and rivalry between themselves, and so they are not in agreement of this fact of not being the community of the just, a community of elite. They come to Jesus and , in an imperative manner, they say: "*«Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field. »*"

Therefore the tone is of who is not in agreement. And Jesus explains it. "*«The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. »*", Son of Man indicates Jesus in His divine condition, "*«The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom »*" Children of the Kingdom are those that have welcomed the condition because the Kingdom becomes reality. And the condition for the Kingdom to become reality is the conversion, the replacement of false values that have a hold on society, to welcome the new proposal of Jesus, that is sharing, service and universal love

"*«The weeds are the sons of the evil one, »*", with the word 'sons' means he who is like the father, and this enemy of Jesus is seen in the devil , that is power, domination, appearance. "*«The harvest is the close of the age..»*", not the end of the world, "*« and the reapers are angels. »*" those sent by the Lord.

And Jesus explains, adding: "*« Just as the weeds are gathered..»*", those that are toxic "*«..and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, »*". This same concept also recalls the discussion between Jesus and Peter, when Jesus says: "*You are a hindrance to me*", due to the idea of a triumphant messiah, a messiah of success, which will be different from the one that Jesus displays.

Therefore here it refers to all those that want triumph, "*«...all causes of sin and all law-breakers, »*". The expression is for those disciples that are constructors of nothing, Jesus had said, why announce the message, but not as an expression of their lives, but rather the use of God's name. They convert others, but have not converted themselves. These Jesus considers as those that sin and are law-breakers, that is those that construct nothing.

And here Jesus borrows the image of the prophet Daniel and says “*«..throw them into the fiery furnace. »*”, meaning complete destruction, symbolizing death. “*«In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth»*”. This is an image that indicates desperation for the failure. In our language the expression. ‘ ‘ has the same meaning, a sign of desperation and failure.

So then. Always using the expression from the book of Daniel “*«...the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father»*”.Who chooses life has life. It is this the meaning of this parable: who produces life enters into the fullness of life; who is dead and has produced death sinks into the fullness of death.